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ATTITUDE OF THE UNITED STATES TOWARD MEXICO

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

DELIVERED BEFORE

A PARTY OF EDITORS FROM THE REPUBLIC OF
MEXICO AT THE WHITE HOUSE
JUNE 7, 1918



WASHINGTON
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
1918

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SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 281.

Reported by Mr. Smith, of Arizona.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,
July 10, 1918.

Resolved, That the address made by the President of the United States to the Mexican editors at the White House on June 7, 1918, be printed as a Senate document.

Attest:

JAMES M. BAKER, *Secretary*.

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AUG 14 1918

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ATTITUDE OF THE UNITED STATES TOWARD MEXICO.

Gentlemen, I have never received a group of men who were more welcome than you are, because it has been one of my distresses during the period of my Presidency that the Mexican people did not more thoroughly understand the attitude of the United States toward Mexico. I think I can assure you, and I hope you have had every evidence of the truth of my assurance, that that attitude is one of sincere friendship. And not merely the sort of friendship which prompts one not to do his neighbor any harm, but the sort of friendship which earnestly desires to do his neighbor service.

NO RIGHT TO INTERFERE IN MEXICO'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS.

My own policy, the policy of my own administration, toward Mexico was at every point based upon this principle, that the internal settlement of the affairs of Mexico was none of our business; that we had no right to interfere with or to dictate to Mexico in any particular with regard to her own affairs. Take one aspect of our relations which at one time may have been difficult for you to understand: When we sent troops into Mexico, our sincere desire was nothing else than to assist you to get rid of a man who was making the settlement of your affairs for the time being impossible. We had no desire to use our troops for any other purpose, and I was in hopes that by assisting in that way and then immediately withdrawing I might give substantial proof of the truth of the assurances that I had given your Government through President Carranza.

EFFORTS SEEN NOW TO MAKE TROUBLE.

And at the present time it distresses me to learn that certain influences, which I assume to be German in their origin, are trying to make a wrong impression throughout Mexico as to the purposes of the United States, and not only a wrong impression, but to give an absolutely untrue account of things that happen. You know the distressing things that have been happening just off our coasts. You know of the vessels that have been sunk. I yesterday received a quotation from a paper in Guadalajara which stated that 13 of our battleships had been sunk off the capes of the Chesapeake. You see how dreadful it is to have people so radically misinformed. It was added that our Navy Department was withholding the truth with regard to these sinkings. I have no doubt that the publisher of the paper published that in perfect innocence without intending to convey wrong impressions, but it is evident that allegations of that sort proceed from those who wish to make trouble between Mexico and the United States.

Now, gentlemen, for the time being, at any rate—and I hope it will not be a short time—the influence of the United States is somewhat pervasive in the affairs of the world, and I believe that it is pervasive because the nations of the world which are less powerful than some of the greatest nations are coming to believe that our sincere desire is to do dis-interested service. We are the champions of those nations which have not had a military standing which would enable them to compete with the strongest nations in the world, and I look forward with pride to the time, which I hope will soon come, when we can give substantial evidence, not only that we do not want anything out of this war, but that we would not accept anything out of it, that it is absolutely a case of dis-interested action. And if you will watch the attitude of our people, you will see that nothing stirs them so deeply as assurances that this war, so far as we are concerned, is for idealistic objects. One of the difficulties that I experienced during the first three years of the war—the years when the United States was not in the war—was in getting the foreign offices of European nations to believe that the United States was seeking nothing for herself, that her neutrality was not selfish, and that if she came in she would not come in to get anything substantial out of the war, any material object, any territory, or trade, or anything else of that sort. In some of the foreign offices there were men who personally knew me and they believed, I hope, that I was sincere in assuring them that our purposes were dis-interested, but they thought that these assurances came from an academic gentleman removed from the ordinary sources of information and speaking the idealistic purposes of the cloister. They did not believe that I was speaking the real heart of the American people, and I knew all along that I was. Now I believe that everybody who comes into contact with the American people knows that I am speaking their purposes.

REFERENCE TO RUSSIA IN RED CROSS SPEECH.

The other night in New York, at the opening of the campaign for funds for our Red Cross, I made an address. I had not intended to refer to Russia, but I was speaking without notes, and in the course of what I said my own thought was led to Russia, and I said that we meant to stand by Russia just as firmly as we would stand by France or England or any other of the allies. The audience to which I was speaking was not an audience from which I would have expected an enthusiastic response to that. It was rather too well dressed. It was not an audience, in other words, made of the class of people whom you would suppose to have the most intimate feeling for the sufferings of the ordinary man in Russia, but that audience jumped into the aisles, the whole audience rose to its feet, and nothing that I had said or that occasion aroused anything like the enthusiasm that that single sentence aroused. Now, there is a sample, gentlemen. We can not make anything out of Russia. We can not make anything out of standing by Russia at this time—the most remote of the European nations, so far as we are concerned, the one with which we have had the least connections in trade and advantage—and yet the people of the United States rose to that suggestion as to no other that I made in that address. That is the heart of America, and we are ready to show you by any act of friendship that you may propose our real feelings toward Mexico.

WON'T TAKE ADVANTAGE OF NEIGHBOR.

Some of us, if I may say so privately, look back with regret upon some of the more ancient relations that we have had with Mexico long before our generation; and America, if I may so express it, would now feel ashamed to take advantage of a neighbor. So I hope that you can carry back to your homes something better than the assurances of words. You have had contact with our people. You know your own personal reception. You know how gladly we have opened to you the doors of every establishment that you wanted to see and have shown you just what we were doing, and I hope you have gained the right impression as to why we were doing it. We are doing it, gentlemen, so that the world may never hereafter have to fear the only thing that any nation has to dread - the unjust and selfish aggression of another nation. Some time ago, as you probably all know, I proposed a sort of Pan American agreement. I had perceived that one of the difficulties of our relationship with Latin America was this: The famous Monroe doctrine was adopted without your consent, without the consent of any of the Central or South American States.

If I may express it in the terms that we so often use in this country, we said, "We are going to be your big brother, whether you want us to be or not." We did not ask whether it was agreeable to you that we should be your big brother. We said we were going to be. Now, that was all very well so far as protecting you from aggression from the other side of the water was concerned, but there was nothing in it that protected you from aggression from us, and I have repeatedly seen the uneasy feeling on the part of representatives of the States of Central and South America that our self-appointed protection might be for our own benefit and our own interests and not for the interest of our neighbors. So I said, "Very well, let us make an arrangement by which we will give bond. Let us have a common guarantee, that all of us will sign, of political independence and territorial integrity. Let us agree that if any one of us, the United States included, violates the political independence or the territorial integrity of any of the others, all the others will jump on her. I pointed out to some of the gentlemen who were less inclined to enter into this arrangement than others that that was in effect giving bonds on the part of the United States that we would enter into an arrangement by which you would be protected from us.

Now, that is the kind of agreement that will have to be the foundation of the future life of the nations of the world, gentlemen. The whole family of nations will have to guarantee to each nation that no nation shall violate its political independence or its territorial integrity. That is the basis, the only conceivable basis, for the future peace of the world, and I must admit that I was ambitious to have the States of the two continents of America show the way to the rest of the world as to how to make a basis of peace. Peace can come only by trust. As long as there is suspicion there is going to be misunderstanding, and as long as there is misunderstanding there is going to be trouble. If you can once get a situation of trust, then you have got a situation of permanent peace. Therefore, every one of us, it seems to me, owes it as a patriotic duty to his own country to plant the seeds of trust and of confidence instead of the seeds

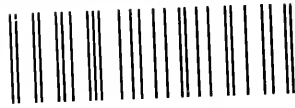
of suspicion and variety of interest. That is the reason that I began by saying to you that I have not had the pleasure of meeting a group of men who were more welcome than you are, because you are our near neighbors. Suspicion on your part or misunderstanding on your part distresses us more than we would be distressed by similar feelings on the part of those less near by.

When you reflect how wonderful a storehouse of treasure Mexico is, you can see how her future must depend upon peace and honor, so that nobody shall exploit her. It must depend upon every nation that has any relations with her, and the citizens of any nation that has relations with her, keeping within the bounds of honor and fair dealing and justice, because so soon as you can admit your own capital and the capital of the world to the free use of the resources of Mexico, it will be one of the most wonderfully rich and prosperous countries in the world. And when you have the foundations of established order, and the world has come to its senses again, we shall, I hope, have the very best connections that will assure us all a permanent cordiality and friendship.



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